

Message Text

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42

ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CU-05 HEW-08 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 OPR-02 A-01 SY-04 OMB-01 ACDA-19 NIC-01 AID-20

DRC-01 /152 W

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P R 021206Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7312

INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

DIA

CINCPAC HONOLULU

13TH AF/IN CLARK AB PI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 15891

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJ: STUDENTS ATTACK CONSTITUTION (VII)

REF: A. BANGKOK 15190 B. BANGKOK 15768 C. BANGKOK 15809

SUMMARY: IT NOW APPEARS THAT THE PEOPLE FOR DEMOCRACY GROUP (PDG) WITH SUPPORT FROM THE NATIONAL STUDENT CENTER OF THAILAND (NSCT) WILL NOT PROTEST BEFORE THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (NLA) ON OCTOBER 5, WHEN THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION PASSES ITS THIRD READING. ALMOST AS QUICKLY AS THEY GATHERED FOR DEMONSTRATIONS AND CONFRONTATION ON SEPTEMBER 18-23, KEY UNIVERSITY STUDENT GROUPS

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AND POLITICAL ACTIVISTS ARE NOW STATING THEIR INTENT TO ACCEPT FOR

THE MOMENT THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION, ALTHOUGH THEY HOPE FOR ITS AMENDMENT LATER. END SUMMARY.

1. THE THAMMASAT STUDENT BODY VOTED ON OCTOBER 1 NOT TO TO JOIN IN ANY DEMONSTRATION ON OCTOBER 5. THE CHULALONGKORN STUDENT BODY HAD ALREADY DECIDED ON SEPTEMBER 29 THAT IT WOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN A PROTEST DEMONSTRATION. ACCORDING TO THE "BANGKOK POST" ON OCTOBER 2, THE NSCT HAS ALSO DECIDED IT WILL NOT PROTEST ON OCTOBER 5 IF THE NLA PASSES THE CONSTITUTION WITHOUT AMENDMENT. INSTEAD AN NSCT DELEGATION WILL PRESENT ITS FOUR-DEMANDS (REF A) TO THE NLA. THE NSCT NOW SEEMS PREPARED TO ACCEPT THAT THE CONSTITUTION WILL NOT BE REVISED UNTIL A NEW ASSEMBLY TAKES ITS SEAT AFTER THE ELECTIONS, CURRENTLY SCHEDULED FOR FEBRUARY 1, 1975. FINALLY, THIRAYUT BUNMI, ACCORDING TO "DAO DARA SIAM" ON OCTOBER 2, HAS DECIDED TO ENTER A WAT (MARBLE TEMPLE) FOR A FIFTEEN-DAY PERIOD. IT TRUE, THIRAYUT'S ABSENCE FROM THE SCENE WOULD PROBABLY MEAN THE PDG WILL NOT ACTIVELY PROTEST PASSAGE OF THE CONSTITUTION ON OCTOBER 5.

2. THE DECISION OF THE THAMMASAT STUDENT BODY TO FOLLOW THAT OF THE CHULALONGKORN STUDENTS AND NOT JOIN IN PROTESTS AGAINST THE NLA IS PARTICULARLY SIGNIFICANT IN VIEW OF RECENT ACTIONS AGAINST ITS OWN UNIVERSITY'S ADMINISTRATION. THAMMASAT STUDENT ACTIVISTS SUCCEEDED IN FORCING THE THAMMASAT ADMINISTRATION TO POSTPONE EXAMS FROM AN EARLIER COMPROMISE DATE OF OCTOBER 15 TO OCTOBER 19 IN ORDER TO GIVE STUDENTS TIME TO PREPARE FOR AND PARTICIPATE IN THE OCTOBER 14 CEREMONIES. THEIR SUCCESS, HOWEVER, WAS ACHIEVED THROUGH DUBIOUS MEANS. WHEN THE ADMINISTRATION DID NOT APPEAR TO BE SUFFICIENTLY FORTHCOMING, THE STUDENTS ON THEIR OWN ANNOUNCED THE CANCELLATION OF EXAMS, THUS FORCING THE ADMINISTRATION'S HAND. THAMMASAT ACTING RECTOR DR. ADUL VICHIANCHARUN, WHO UNTIL RECENTLY HAS BEEN A STRONG SUPPORTER OF THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS RESPONDED BY ANNOUNCING HIS RESIGNATION AND THAT OF SEVEN OTHER DEANS AS A PROTEST AGAINST STUDENT PRESSURE TACTICS. HE STATED THAT THOUGH STUDENTS COULD PRESSURE THE NLA, THEY COULD NOT PRESSURE HIM. THE CURRENT SITUATION WITHIN THAMMASAT ITSELF IS TENSE. THE DECISION THEREFORE BY THE THAMMASAT STUDENT BODY NOT TO JOIN IN ANY FURTHER PROTESTS AGAINST THE NLA ON OCTOBER 5 MIGHT INDICATE A DESIRE TO TAKE A LOWER PROFILE, AND ALLOW TIME

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FOR PASSIONS TO COOL.

3. THE DECISION OF THE NSCT NOT TO PROTEST IS EXPLAINED IN SIMILAR TERMS. UNIVERSITY STUDENT POLITICAL ACTIVISM RECEIVED A SEVERE BODY BLOW AS A RESULT OF ITS LATEST FLIRTATION WITH OTHER NONSTUDENT POLITICAL ACTIVISTS, PARTICULARLY THIRAYUT BUNMI. PUBLIC AND PRESS OPINION HAS BEEN VERY MUCH AGAINST THE TACTICS USED BY THE PDG-NSCT PROTESTERS DURING SEPTEMBER 18-23.

IN ADDITION, OF COURSE, NONE OF THE UNIVERSITY GROUPS ARE PREPARED TO CLASH WITH VOCATIONAL STUDENTS WHO HAVE COME OUT SO STRONGLY AGAINST THE NSCT AND THIRAYUT. TODAY, FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST, THE DEFENDERS OF DEMOCRACY IN THAILAND ARE THE VOCATIONAL STUDENTS, NOT THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS. UNIVERSITY STUDENT ACTIVISM IS THUS AT A CRITICAL CROSSROADS. THIS IS A TIME FOR "READING THE TEA LEAVES" AND REFLECTING ON THE FUTURE IN VIEW OF RECENT EVENTS.

4. CONCLUSION: WE EXPECT STUDENT AND NONSTUDENT POLITICAL ACTIVISTS TO END THEIR CONFRONTATION WITH THE CURRENT NLA. INSTEAD WE EXPECT THEM TO LOOK TO THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN AS A NEW FOCUS FOR THEIR ACTIVISM AND TO PREPARE THE GROUND FOR A NEW EFFORT AT CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT WHEN THE NEWLY-ELECTED ASSEMBLYMEN TAKE THEIR SEATS AFTER THE FEBRUARY 1975 ELECTIONS. WE WILL NOT BE SURPRISED AT THAT TIME TO SEE NEW DEMANDS FOR OTHER AMENDMENTS IN ADDITION TO THE FOUR CURRENT ONES.
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